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THE PAINTINGS OF THE GROTTA CAMPANA

THE earliest mythological representation in Etruria is to be found, according to Petersen, in one of the four archaic paintings which decorate the Etruscan chamber-tomb near Veii known as the Grotta Campana.¹ The fresco in question (Fig. 1) depicts a rider with two attendants on foot, one of whom walks beside the horse, holding the animal's rein, while the other is in advance of the party, with a double axe on his shoulder; on the croup of the horse behind the rider sits a leopard or panther, and under the horse is a dog.² Petersen maintains that this represents a well-known subject, the return of Hephaestus to Olympus under the escort of Dionysus. This theory, which, as far as I can learn, has not been discussed in print, seems to me untenable, and I should like to present the case against it and in favor of another interpretation of the picture.

What is there in the Veian painting to suggest the return of Hephaestus? Little but a slight general similitude resting on the fact that it portrays a rider under escort. The only argument that can be brought for the identification of the rider with Hephaestus is the presence of a double axe in the picture, and the panther is the only conceivable indication of the Dionysiac rout. Though the double axe is frequently an attribute of Hephaestus, it is not confined to him,³ and here, moreover, we find it in the hands, not of the supposed Hephaestus, but of an attendant. Nor is the appearance of the panther in archaic art restricted to Dionysiac scenes; it occurs also in association

¹ *Über die älteste etruskische Wandmalerei*, *Röm. Mitt.* 1902, pp. 149 ff.

² Micali, *Monum. ined.* I, LVIII; Canina, *Veii*, XXXI; Dennis, *Etruria*, p. 34; Martha, *L'art étrusque*, p. 422. In the photograph by R. Moscioni (4560) little is distinguishable.

³ See below, p. 7, note 1.

with other deities and even with ordinary mortals.¹ In fact, our picture, which cannot be later than the beginning of the sixth century,² and in its original conception is probably still earlier, is much older than any known representation of the panther in connection with Dionysus,³ and also older than any

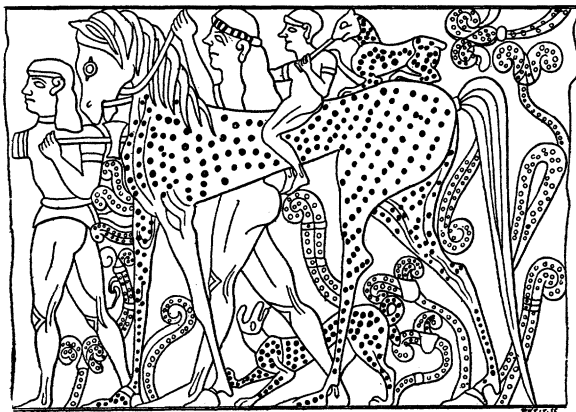


FIGURE 1. — PAINTING IN THE GROTTA CAMPANA (Martha, *L'Art Étrusque*, p. 422).

known representation of the return of Hephaestus.⁴ Consequently other proof is needed before we can admit that either Dionysus or Hephaestus is present, and there is none to show. Nothing in the limning of any member of the party suggests in the least that he is a god and not a mortal. The only noteworthy feature of the rider is his smallness of stature, which Petersen seeks to parallel among the illustrations of the Hephaestus myth. But this proves nothing at all, for such dispro-

¹ Panther and Athena, Gerhard, *Auserl. Vasenb.* pl. 141, 2; with Nereids, *ibid.* pl. 113. For the panther in genre scenes see below.

² The earliest interment in the Grotta Campana seems to have been about contemporary with the graves surrounding the Regulini-Galassi tomb; it would date, therefore, approximately 600 B.C., since according to Pinza the Regulini-Galassi tomb dates about 625 (*Röm. Mitt.* 1907, pp. 35 ff.). The preparation of the paintings is not likely to have been much prior to the first interment.

³ The panther first begins to be associated with Dionysus on the Cyrenaic vases (Keller, *Thiere*, p. 150); it does not become his constant companion until the fifth century (Reinach, *Mon. Piot*, IV, p. 110).

⁴ Petersen, *l.c.* p. 152.

portion between horse and rider is frequent in archaic art.¹ The two attendants are certainly not satyrs; are they Dionysus and Hermes? There is nothing to indicate it, or even to distinguish one from the other. On the contrary, in all these figures the artist has done his best to show that he is painting men and not gods, for he has represented them beardless and naked.²

To extenuate the scantiness of this evidence it helps but little to cite instances in which a rendition of the myth lacks this or that detail, for none can be adduced that lacks so many of the usual features and has so few. Nor does Petersen further his case by the assertion that the Etruscan painter who copied this scene from a Greek original is responsible for extensive alterations.³ This assumption comes perilously near to begging the question, since the alterations which it postulates are so thoroughgoing as to deprive the picture of all certain means of identification; and it is purely gratuitous, for neither in this fresco nor in any of its companions is there anything to indicate such procedure. On the contrary, what evidence there is appears to show that the copyist followed a very different method; he erred through over faithfulness rather than the reverse.⁴

Clearly the theory that our picture represents the return of Hephaestus rests on a very insecure basis. In my opinion there is much more reason to believe that we are dealing with ordinary mortals, and that the subject is nothing but a hunting scene. To such an explanation there can be only one serious objection, — the presence of the panther. Petersen says that this animal is certainly not a mere ornament, and he is right. But I see in the beast not the attribute of a god, but the plaything of a man; a tame animal, used in the chase and trained to ride behind his master.

¹ Strikingly similar in this respect are the mounted figures on a very old stone relief from Prinia in Crete (Karo, *Arch. Anz.* 1908, p. 123) and an ivory situla from Chiusi (Collignon, *Mon. Piot*, IX, pl. I).

² Petersen himself calls them *typische Jünglingsfiguren*, but maintains that they have been changed by the Etruscan copyist. See the next note.

³ "Das Misverständniss des etruskischen Malers, der aus dem führenden oder begleitenden Hermes oder Dionysos typische Jünglingsfiguren gemacht hat, und statt eines Maultiers oder Esels dem Gott ein Ross gab" etc. (*l.c.* p. 152).

⁴ See below.

The taming of leopards for use in hunting is a practice which has been followed in the East from time immemorial. According to Sir William Jones, Persian records ascribe its origin to the reign of King Hushing (865 B.C.);¹ but it can be traced much further back than this, for there is evidence to show its existence in Egypt under the seventeenth and eighteenth dynasties.² From the Orient the practice became known to classical antiquity, as Keller has shown in his well-known work on animals.³ Tame leopards, usually in leash, are not infrequently represented in early Greek art, the first instance being the Cyrenaic vase known as the Arkesilas cylix, on which a leopard with a collar about his neck sits under the chair of King Arkesilas.⁴ There is another work of art approximately contemporary to the Arkesilas cylix which has escaped Keller's notice, and which shows us a hunting-leopard in action.⁵ I refer to an archaic ivory relief of Ionic character in the Museo Gregoriano, belonging to a series which Pollak dates in the middle of the sixth century B.C. and assigns to a Cypriote origin.⁶ It represents a hunter throttling a stag; at the same moment the stag is being bitten in the belly by an animal which Pollak calls a *hündinähnliches Thier*, but which is certainly a

¹ *Encycl. Brittan.* s.v. *Cheetah*.

² Keller, *Antike Tierwelt*, I (*Säugetiere*), p. 86.

³ *Thiere des class. Alterthums*, pp. 145, 154; cf. *Ant. Tierwelt*, l.c. To the evidence collected by Keller we may add an archaic terra-cotta whistle from Rhodes in the Boston Museum (unpublished; cf. *Arch. Anz.* XXII, p. 396), the body of which is formed by a leopard wearing a leash. The animal is called a cat in the notice just cited, but the leash and the fact that its hide is spotted (ascertained through the kindness of Mr. L. D. Caskey) certify that it is a leopard. See also the late silver cup published by Graeven, *Jb. Arch.* I. XV, p. 203.

⁴ Babelon, *Cab. des Ant.* pl. XII. In the interpretation Puchstein (*Arch. Zeit.* 1880, p. 185) and Reinach (*Mon. Piot*, IV, p. 113) are agreed. Another Cyrenaic cup (*Arch. Zeit.* 1881, pl. 13, 5) shows a dog similarly seated under a man's chair.

⁵ The only classical testimony adduced by Keller for the use of leopards in the chase comes from Aelian (*Nat. Anim.* XVII, 26), who remarks on the employment of "lions" (ἀλλ' οὐχ οἱ μέγιστοι) in this way; from Luxorius, who saw hunting-leopards at work in the Roman amphitheatre in the sixth century A.D. (*Anth. Lat.* 514), and from the anonymous tractate *De Monstris* (Phaedrus, ed. Robert, *App.* p. 157; Haupt, *Opusc.* II, p. 229), where their employment is ascribed to certain fabulous "bearded huntresses."

⁶ *Mon. Ant.* VI, 46, 3; Pollak, *Röm. Mitt.* 1906, pp. 314 ff., pl. XVI.

she-panther. Pollak's indecisive description was probably influenced by the consideration that in a hunting scene a dog was to be expected; but the small, oval head, the long, low body, the long, sinuous tail, and in general the pose and carriage of the animal, bespeak a member of the feline race. It may be added, too, that she-panthers are frequent on Ionic monuments, whereas she-dogs are rare.¹ That the hunter has wings on his back and feet does not proclaim him a supernatural being, but merely symbolizes the swiftness of his motion, as Pollak demonstrates by comparison with other Ionic works of art.² I do not hesitate, therefore, to cite this relief as evidence for the use of panthers in hunting.

The notion of carrying a hunting-leopard on the back of a horse may well appear somewhat singular, especially in view of the fact that in modern India cheetahs are ordinarily conveyed to the field in enclosed wagons; but the existence of such a custom in the East is well attested. Marco Polo observed it at the court of the Great Khan.³ "The Khan himself goes every week to see his birds sitting in mew, and sometimes he rides through the park with a leopard behind him on his horse's croup, and then if he sees any animal that takes his fancy, he slips his leopard at it, and the game when taken is made over to feed the hawks in mew. This he does for diversion." Marsden in his note on this passage quotes from the *History of Quadrupeds* to the following effect: "The ounce is common in Barbary, Persia and China; is much more gentle than the leopard, and like the hunting-leopard is sometimes trained to the chase. Instead of being conveyed in a waggon, it is carried on the crupper of the horse, is as much under command as a setting-dog, returns at a call and jumps up behind its master." The custom, which appears to have been widespread, was even introduced into Europe by the Emperor Frederick II,⁴ and in Renaissance art we find illustrations of it which form an

¹ The two bitches on the sarcophagus from Clazomene in Berlin (*Ant. Denkm.* II, pl. 58; cf. Zahn, *Jb. Arch. I.* 1908, pp. 169 ff.) are the only examples known to me, and they are characterized very differently.

² *l.c.* p. 325; see also Brunn, *Kleine Schriften*, I, p. 328.

³ Yule (second edition), I, p. 290 (Book I, Chap. LXI).

⁴ See the notes in the Yule-Cordier edition of Polo.

interesting comparison with the fresco in the Campana tomb.¹

According to Colonel Yule, Arabian writers say that leopards were first carried to the field in this manner by the Khalif Yazid, son of Moahwiyeh, whose date is approximately 680 A.D. This tradition is interesting as evidence for the long duration of the custom, but it must not be interpreted too literally. Eastern customs are persistent, and it is more than likely that Yazid simply reintroduced at court a practice that had fallen into disuse during the austere rule of the immediate successors of the Prophet. But even if the custom was not continuous, it may well have suggested itself at different times through the ages to various peoples that rode horseback and kept tame leopards. To such peoples the idea would be a natural one, for the beast would have to be carried to the field to save its strength for the chase, and there would be no other way to carry it conveniently.

Apart from the fresco under discussion, an indication that the custom was known in antiquity is perhaps afforded by a vase of *bucchero sottile* in the Berlin Museum, on which is engraved in a style resembling that of our painting a bridled horse with a leopard standing on his back.² Since the animal is obviously not attacking the horse, and since the horse wears a bridle, there is some ground for believing that we have here another picture of a hunting-leopard. It is worth noting, too, that representations of an ape carried behind a horseman in this manner are furnished us by a pitcher from Tragliatella (a rude copy of an Ionic model, roughly contemporary with the Grotta Campana paintings) and by a fibula from Este.³

In view of these considerations it seems to me entirely reasonable to call our animal a hunting-leopard. Such an inter-

¹ In the background of Gentile da Fabriano's *Adorazione dei Magi* and of Benozzo Gozzoli's treatment of the same theme in the Palazzo Riccardi. There is also a fine print by John Stradanus (P. Lacroix, *Mœurs, Usages et Costumes au Moyen Age*, etc., p. 205, Fig. 141).

² Furtwängler, *Katalog*, 1541; illustrated by Karo, *De arte vascul. antiquiss.* pl. i.

³ The Tragliatella vase is illustrated in the *Annali*, 1881, pls. L and M, the fibula from Este in Montelius, I, pl. 51, 4; see also Hoernes, *Jh. Oest. Arch. I.* I, p. 12; *Urgeschichte*, p. 422, note 1 and p. 479.

pretation accounts for his position on the croup of the horse, which otherwise we should have to consider a mere whim on the part of the painter; it accounts, too, for the object extending from the rider's hand to the beast's muzzle, which is much more likely to be a leash than either a whip, as Micali calls it (which is not carried in this way), or a pair of tongs (which it does not in the least resemble). We have already seen that there is nothing to distinguish the rider and his attendants from ordinary human beings — that, in fact, their dress, or, if you will, their lack of it, proclaims them to be men and not gods. The double axe carried by the foremost figure is certainly appropriate to a hunting-scene,¹ and so is the dog beneath the horse. Heretofore the scene has usually been considered genre in spite of the leopard; there is surely no ground to interpret it otherwise when the leopard can be accounted for on this basis more readily than on any other.

There is only one point which calls for further comment — the appearance of a hunting-leopard on the wall of an Etruscan tomb. In view of the close connection that existed between Etruria and the East, it is quite possible that this method of hunting was introduced thence into Etruria. What actually happened in the Middle Ages, when the bonds of union were little if any closer, may easily have happened earlier. But it is not necessary to make this supposition, for our painting and its fellows of the Grotta Campana are not in any sense original creations of a native artist; they are merely copies of a model from overseas.

Barring certain infelicities of execution which may fairly be ascribed to a copyist, there is not a single feature in the Campana paintings which can be called Etruscan. In all essential particulars they are Greek. They are not, however, directly related to the art of Greece proper, but belong to the great sphere of orientalizing Greek culture that, rightly or wrongly, is to-day labelled Ionic. The nature of the ground-

¹ Among the Greeks, to be sure, the axe was a tool and not a weapon. But the Greeks knew that other peoples used it in war; as a barbarian weapon they give it to the Amazons and to the Scythians. As for its use in the chase, a red-figured vase in Naples (Heydemann, 3251) shows us a Phrygian boar-hunt in which most of the participants carry axes.

ornamentation, for instance, is entirely foreign to Corinthian art as we know it in the vases; though it has something in common with the Early Attic and the Melian vases, it finds its nearest analogy in the decorations of the ostrich-eggs found at Vulci and in bronze and silver work of Ionic stamp.¹ Again, in the representations of leopards we find here four different ways of treating the head — one in profile, another in full face, a third turned backward, and a fourth with open jaws and hanging tongue. The multiplicity of types and the presence of the fourth type are characteristic of Ionic art. Another definite Ionic feature is the mane which appears on the back of the last-mentioned leopard and on the back of the Sphinx.² The dog beneath the horse in our picture is a stock subject of Ionic vases and sarcophagi,³ and the armbands of the men and the loin-cloth worn by one of them belong to the orientalizing Greek world.

For the occurrence of Ionic paintings on the walls of an Etruscan tomb there are two possible explanations. They may be either original productions by an imported artist, or copies from an imported model. The hypothesis that Ionic artists lived and worked in Etruria has often been advanced, and, as a general proposition, is entirely probable; but, in this case, I prefer to assume that we are dealing with a native copy

¹ Compare the ornament at the side of the upper left-hand picture (Montelius, *La civilis. primit. en Italie*, II, 2, pl. 354, 3, not illustrated in Martha or Dennis) with the palmette-tree on the paterae from Amathus (Perrot-Chipiez, III, p. 775, Fig. 547), Dali (*ibid.* p. 779, Fig. 548), and Curium (*ibid.* 789, Fig. 552). The "lotus" ornament in our pictures occurs on the ostrich-eggs illustrated *ibid.* p. 857, Fig. 625, and p. 859, Fig. 627; compare also the larnax from the Tomba del Duce in Vetulonia (Montelius, II, 1, pl. 188, Fig. 1 c) and a bronze from Cervetri (*Mus. Greg.* I, xvi).

² It is found on the great lebes-stand from Cervetri (*Mus. Greg.* I, xvii); the gilded cup from Vetulonia (Falchi, *Vetulonia*, pl. x); the Perugia bronze reliefs (*Ant. Denkm.* II, pl. 15, 3); the polychrome bucchero from Vulci (*Journal of Hellen. Stud.* 1894, pl. VII, cf. p. 211 and note 8); a sarcophagus from Clazomene (*Ant. Denkm.* II, pl. 58; Zahn, *Jb. Arch.* I. 1908, pp. 169 ff.); a vase-fragment from Cyme in Aeolis (*Röm. Mitt.* 1888, pp. 164-165); a Caeretan hydria (*Ant. Denkm.* II, pl. 28); and a stone relief from Phoenicia representing a Sphinx (from Aradus; Longpérier, *Musée Nap.* pl. xviii, 4; Perrot-Chipiez, III, p. 129, Fig. 73).

³ It is not, however, confined to the Ionic sphere; see Zahn, *Jb. Arch.* I. 1908, p. 174, note 10.

of an imported model. This is indicated, it seems to me, not only by the general appearance of the frescoes, in which the execution is far inferior to the conception, but by certain particulars in which the sign-manual of the copyist is written large. There are many ineptitudes which can best be explained as misinterpretations of an original which had for some reason or other become partially illegible. These are frequent in the ground-ornamentation,¹ but occur also in the rendition of figures, as, for instance, in the unique treatment of the fore-shoulder of one of the leopards represented.² Again, the copyist betrays himself in the faulty accommodations of the subject portrayed to the space at his command. This comes out most clearly in the picture opposite to the one under discussion,³ in which the peculiar ornament at the side, which resembles a Jacob's ladder, not only far exceeds the legitimate proportions of a space-filler, but at the top crowds and is crowded by the horse's head. The head is disproportionately small, and is so reined in that the face continues the vertical line of the fore-leg and chest, while the ornament itself is so far deflected to the right that its lack of symmetry is very noticeable. To my mind this reciprocal crowding is sufficient in itself to prove that the painter of the Grotta Campana was blindly following a model. After beginning, perhaps, with the figure of the rider and completing that of the horse, he discovered that he had not left enough room for the ornament. Not venturing either to leave it out or to modify it materially, he devised this solution, which discloses to us not only that his picture is a copy, but that it is as faithful a copy as he with his limitations could produce.

Our picture, then, in that it is copied from an Ionic model, is exactly parallel to the Tragliatella vase on which we find a rider with an ape behind him. Its original, like that of the Tragliatella vase, belonged to the same art-world with the Arkesilas cylix and the carved ivory from Cyprus—a world which stood in so close relation to the Orient that the appear-

¹ See especially the lower left-hand picture, Martha, p. 424 ; Dennis, p. 36.

² In the lower right-hand picture, Martha, p. 423 ; Dennis, p. 35.

³ Montelius, II, 2, pl. 354, 3.

ance of tame monkeys and leopards on its monuments is not a matter to cause surprise.¹

¹ Ionic monuments also exhibit the use of dogs and apparently of lions in war — practices decidedly un-Greek. See Zahn, *l.c.* p. 175, note 12, who collects the bibliography for the use of dogs in war ; for the use of the lion, see the sarcophagus from Cervetri in the Brit. Mus. published by Murray (*Terracotta Sarcophagi*, pls. 9-11 ; *Mon. Piot*, IV, 30).

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